



Worship - Here and There

Forever!

By

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Love and Worship go hand in hand. God Loved us before He created the world. He created us with the innate ability to return His Love. That love for God is Worship. We know from the beginning relationship of God and man that obedience is vital to Worship. “Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man...” (Genesis 2:15-16) Worship has never been about what we want to do; it’s always been about what God wants us to do. Obedience and Worship go hand in hand. We cannot have one without the other.

Worship is an important part of the fabric of faith in God. We worship God because He is worthy of our worship. We worship God because we trust Him. We worship God because He has done everything for us. He has saved us from the penalty of sin and provided us with eternal life. We love God because He first loved us.

This week we’ve looked at personal and corporate Worship. We’ve seen Worship through the eyes of God and His people. We’ve watched as the faithful through the centuries bowed their heads, lowered their bodies to the ground and praised God’s Holy Name. Worship is a top priority in a believer’s life. Jesus says it should be priority #1.

“Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, ‘Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?’ He answered and said to them, ‘Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: ‘This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’ For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men—the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do.’ He said to them, ‘All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition.’” Mark 7:5-9

Remember that obedience is vital to the Worship of God. The Pharisees and scribes were among the most religious people in Israel, but they worshiped God in vain because they “rejected the commandment of God” so they could keep their human traditions. They actually taught “as doctrines the commandments of men.”

“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.’ Jesus said to her, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.’” John 4:20-24

The woman from Samaria had been raised with a narrow and incorrect view about worshipping God. The Samaritans came from a long line of people who had populated the land once belonging to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. The Kingdom fell to invaders in the late 8th Century B.C. and many of the children of Israel living there were taken into captivity and to other countries. The invaders brought people from many other nations to repopulate the land of Israel. Samaritans of Jesus' time included remnants of the northern tribes of Israel along with descendants from Gentile nations. Jews did not like them. Samaritans did not like Jews. They disagreed about how to worship and where to worship God. Jesus had compassion on the people of Samaria and went right to the heart of their view of worship: "You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth."

True Worship of God is far more than nationality, religious background or location. True Worship is about the heart, the mind and the will. True worshipers will worship God in spirit and truth.

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24

We have to make a choice. We cannot serve two masters because that will lead us to hate the one and love the other. We will be loyal to the one and despise the other. We cannot serve God and _____. Fill in the blank. Jesus was speaking to people in the context of money. It's also true about anything else that could master you. It might be love of another human. It might be personal fame. Anything that could master you is something that can keep you from worshiping God.

“He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.” Matthew 10:36-38

“Jesus said to him, ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” Matthew 22:37

“But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass by justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.” Luke 11:42

Jesus closed the door on approving any kind of relationship with God that does not include devotion. Love and adoration and devotion lead naturally to a desire to worship and praise God.

Christians love the complete story of God's Love for them. Our relationship with Jesus Christ does not end at our death. In fact, our physical death opens the door to the most intimate of love relationship with Jesus. We enter into His Presence at our death!

What happened to Adam and Eve immediately after they sinned against God? They sewed fig leaves together to cover their nakedness and they hid themselves from the "presence of the Lord God." (Genesis 3:7-8) What did God do? He "drove out the man" from the Garden of Eden. (Genesis 3:24) Human beings were removed from the Presence of God. What have human beings tried to do ever since that terrible day? Find their way back into His Presence.

I wrote extensively about this in my book *A History of Man's Quest For Immortality* (Fifth Estate Publishing, 2007). For thousands of years, the human race has tried every imaginable way to regain their lost immortality and standing in the Presence of God. God blessed the people of Israel with the amazing privilege of His Presence. He appeared to them as a Cloud and Fire. He inhabited the Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Temple. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, walked among men and women, boys and girls, and made His Presence known in powerful and unforgettable ways. It is through Jesus Christ that Jews and Gentiles can know God and actually have His Spirit live inside them!

That brings us to our future. We know that when we die we will enter into the Presence of God. Paul wrote to the Corinthians believers that to be absent from the body (death) is to be present with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8). It sounds strange to non-believers for us to say that to be absent is to be present, and to be present is to be absent, but it's true. We can't experience complete presence with God unless we also experience complete absence from our earthly bodies. Paul wrote extensively about that in his first letter to the Corinthians. I invite you to read all of Chapter 15, but here's a small portion that addresses this idea of absent from the body and present with the Lord. The secret is the fact that God will give us a new body that is immortal, unlike the mortal body we have now.

“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’ Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain—perhaps wheat or some other grain. But God gives it a body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body. All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of animals, another of fish, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differs from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a

spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, 'The first man Adam became a living being.' The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." 1 Corinthians 15:35-45

We also know from Paul's letters that there will be a time in the future when some Christians will be present with the Lord without experiencing physical death. We don't know the day or hour, but we do know it's coming.

"Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?' The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians 15:51-57

Paul gave us more details about this amazing experience in his first letter to the Thessalonian believers.

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.” 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

This is wonderful! Whether we die first or are alive when Jesus returns for His own, we will go into the Presence of the Lord forever. So, what happens to Worship when we're in Heaven? Will we sit on clouds strumming on harps as many in the world believe? No. Our lives will be rich and full and busy and fruitful. We will Worship God in His Very Presence. We will rule and judge nations. We will experience all that God intended for us when He created Adam, plus more because we will have our Savior and Lord with us for eternity!

Jesus was always Lord, but He became our Savior on that special Day when He shed His precious Blood and died on the Cross in the ancient city of Jerusalem. That Day almost 2,000 years ago expanded the Worship of God in Heaven to new heights. The first Heavenly Song we hear in the Book of Revelation is an old Song that has been sung for thousands of years: “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8b) “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.” (Revelation 4:11) The next Song we hear in Heaven is a new Song:

“And they sang a new song, saying: ‘You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth.’” Revelation 5:9-10

Our Worship of God kicks into high gear when we come into His Presence. We will sing the old song and the new song of praise to our Risen Lord. We will be standing among the millions of angels and hundreds of millions of redeemed saints when we all worship Him together:

“Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice: ‘Worthy is the Lamb who was

slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!’ And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: ‘Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!’ Then the four living creatures said, ‘Amen!’ And the twenty-four elders fell down and worshiped Him who lives forever and ever.”

Revelation 5:11-14

And we say with them — Amen and Amen!

Originally posted to the GraceLife Blog on February 5, 2010

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